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A Word From Tim Downs - April 2012



Dear Friends,

It has always struck me that the rhythms of Conference life pulse to a different beat than those of the local church or even the liturgical calendar. Even as we move through Lent, a season during which many of our churches are focusing in new ways on spiritual disciplines, being more attentive to contemplative and prayerful aspects of our faith practices, we in the conference are setting in place the themes that will reflect our priorities for 2012.



We welcome to the staff Kimberly Knight, who will be our Director of Communications. Kimberly, who is a recent graduate of Candler School of Theology, and soon to be a member in discernment in the United Church of Christ, bring to this position gifts that will help us develop our social networking and further develop our web site. She is a member of Kirkwood United Church of Christ. Communication continues to be a challenge for us in the Southeast Conference and in these days during which the methods of communication are evolving rapidly, we are looking for new ways to reach people of all generations.

Debbie Spearman who is our Director of Financial Development has set a goal of completing the follow-up to our capital campaign to "transform churches and transform lives" by the end of this year. Further she is beginning to reach out to local churches to offer support with stewardship resources, financial development and mission interpretation. This work is particularly critical in 2012 given that in 2011 we saw a significant decline of \$10,000 in OCWM Basic Support from local churches. Gerri and I in the conference office are working to continue to cut our expenses, and have renegotiated contracts for services to achieve significant saving this year.

Kathy Clark and Sarah Kim are engaged in the challenging undertaking of launching the PATHWAYS project fully in the fall. We are pleased that they have raised \$95,000 for the year 2012 to do this. We have negotiated contracts with the Center for Progressive Renewal and Lancaster Seminary, are continuing to develop the curriculum and the administrative infrastructure of the program, and we are actively reaching out to other conference across the United Church of Christ to partner with them to bring PATHWAYS to those who are interested in developing multiple paths to authorized ministry in the UCC.

In the office we are beginning to focus on the upcoming Annual Meeting of the conference which will be held June 8th and 9th, hosted by First Congregational UCC, Birmingham. Details about this meeting will be in place soon, but now is the time to mark your calendars!

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UCC's Mission:1 receives DeRose-Hinkhouse Memorial Award

Mission:1 awarded "Best of Class" in the Public Relations, Advertising Campaign category during the Religion Communicators Council annual conference in Philadelphia.



All of these foci on the part of our staff represent our commitments to support the local churches of our conferences, develop leadership for the emerging church, and strengthen the bonds that hold us together. We look forward to your continued partnership as we build the UCC in the South.

Peace,

Tim Downs

Timothy C. Downs, Conference Minister

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Local Church News - April 2012

Eighth Anniversary

On Sunday April 22 at 9:00A, **Sankofa UCC** , a new church established originally in 2004 by co-pastors Derrick Rice and Susan Mitchell will celebrate their eight anniversary at Rush Memorial UCC, Atlanta. Timothy McDonald, a leading preacher in the Atlanta area will be the guest preacher.

Derrick Rice continues as senior pastor of Sankofa UCC, and Susan Mitchell currently serves in the national setting of the UCC , directing capital campaigns for local churches in the eastern United States.

Active Disciples at Open Table

Open Table continues to "follow Jesus in Christian love, spiritual and social transformation, biblical hospitality, grace-filled inclusion, and joyful worship." Last month they hosted a Contact Your Legislators event following worship to urge Alabama legislators and Governor to repeal HB 56, the current immigration law of that state. Open Table is actively providing contact information for legislators, stamps and stationery, sample scripts and letters, WiFi for emailing--and Mexican desserts. Worship and sermon in early March was themed around the immigration issue. On Saturday March 6, Open Table participated in the program that preceded Occupy Mobile's march to the state capital to oppose their state's regressive tax on groceries and one of our members is leading the group that will walk all the way to Montgomery. One member of Open Table, Todd Duren has started a social media campaign in solidarity with immigrants. See recent article on that initiative by [clicking here](#). Open Table is also in the process of providing support for a young man who was recently released from prison on March 19.

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Lifting Up... April 2012

We have received word that the sister of **Angela Balfour Franklin**, member of the Conference board and sister-in-law of Rodney Franklin, pastor of First Congregational UCC, Birmingham, has been in treatment for a diagnosis of cancer. We will hold them and their family in our prayers.

We are saddened to announce the **death of Rev. Jimmy Fields on March 16th**, who served for over thirty-five years as pastor of the Plymouth Congregational UCC in Charleston, SC. Jimmy had been active through the years in the life and leadership of the Association and Conference, and was an eloquent and fierce voice for justice. He is survived by his widow, Inez, and daughter and three sons.

We were saddened to hear of the recent **death of the mother of Glenna Shepherd**. Glenna is the pastor of Decatur UCC, Decatur, GA. Please keep her and her family in your prayers.

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Feature Focus - April 2012



Thailand Immersion 2012

The Global Theological Education (GTE) Program emerged out of the Theology Among the People (TAP) program of the Southeast

Conference, UCC, in the efforts to broaden our theological horizon within the pluralistic religious and cultural environment face by the church today. Since our first trip to Thailand in 2008, we have had the opportunity to bring 45 people on this life-changing immersion experience in a culture that is in so many ways different from ours in North America. Made possible by the generous grant from the Henry Luce Foundation and in association with our partners—the Lancaster Theological Seminary and the Institute for Religion, Culture, and Peace (IRCP) of Payap University in Thailand—we successfully accomplished our trip in January of 2012. The 2012 trip participants comprised of six Lancaster seminarians, six members of the Southeast Conference, three facilitators—Rev. Dr. Tim Downs, Rev. Kathy Clark who also served as the adjunct professor for Lancaster Seminary, and Rev. Dr. Sarah Kim. Journeying together had begun with a Pre-trip Retreat in Lancaster on September 23-25, 2011, and ended with a Post-trip Retreat in Atlanta on March 9-11, 2012, with the two and a half weeks of immersion in Thailand, or the Land of Smile, in January. We visited three cities starting with Chiang Mai, the home of our host Institute, then Mae Sot, a small city near the Burmese-Thai border with a high concentration of Burmese refugees, and then finishing our trip in one of the largest cities in the world, Bangkok.

The intensity of the immersion trip has much to do with the broad spectrum of study topics we were introduced to. Under the topic of interfaith dialogue, we engaged in studies of Buddhism, Thai Islam, and Christianity in Thailand that included a conversation with a Catholic priest at the beautiful Seven Fountains Spirituality Center. In studying conflict



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Center. In studying conflict transformation and peace-building, we learned about the violent conflict between the Buddhists and Muslims in Southern Thailand and the seemingly endless suffering and isolation of the Burmese refugees



living in a camp in a remote mountainous area. Learning about the important social ministries (e.g. HIV/AIDS work) carried out of the engaged Buddhists and the delightful aspects—at times subtle and at times flamboyant—of Thai culture and cuisine has been much like the icing on a delicious cake. In light of the testimonies of the participants who come from all walks of life pursuing both ordained and lay ministry, the total experience has been quite transformative to say the least.



Those of us who have never flown on an airplane now are bona fide world travelers; those of us who work for justice and peace have stretched our imagination as to what may be possible in the face of most unthinkable human predicament; those of us who find ourselves in the turmoil of

pluralism and diversity now have a better grasp of what it means to be a Christian and what it takes to maintain that call and identity. Many of us are still processing what we have seen, heard, tasted, smelled, and touched; though the memories of our time together may fade away over time, the experiences we have shared that struck our deepest cords within will continue to manifest in the ways we live throughout our lifetime. Thanks Be to God.

Feature Focus - February 2012



46 Years Young



2016 will mark the fiftieth year since the organization of the Southeast Conference of the UCC.

In preparation for this noteworthy anniversary the Board of Directors of the conference has supported Michael Stroud as he researches the history of the Conference in preparing to write a book about these fifty years. We will feature some of the remarkable stories that are scattered across our history as a part of the conference e-

newsletter. Today, we offer you the first of these stories. We are deeply grateful to

newsletter. Today, we offer you the first of these stories. We are deeply grateful to Michael Stroud for his commitment to this project and we hope that you will both enjoy and be inspired by it!

[Alabama](#) | [Georgia](#) | [Mississippi](#) | [South Carolina](#) | [Tennessee](#) | [NW Florida](#)

The Last Conference

The Southeast Conference was the last of the conferences of the United Church of Christ to be organized following the formation of the denomination in 1957. An initial attempt to organize the Southeast Conference failed on a first vote in 1964 by the Southeast Convention, but delegates approved the matter to be reviewed again the following year. The Convention of the South approved the joining relationship on its first vote. On April 24, 1965. The new Southeast Conference began operations on New Year's Day 1966.

[Link here to read the complete article](#) and others from the history of the SECUCC.



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SEC 2012 Annual Meeting



SEC Annual Meeting 2012

Circle your calendars for **June 8th and 9th**, the dates for the Annual Meeting of the Southeast Conference.



We will be hosted by First Congregational UCC, Birmingham, and we are honored to be able to welcome Holly MillerShank, the newly elected team leader of the MESA (The Ministerial Excellence Support and Authorization) Team of the United Church of Christ. Holly has been instrumental in the introduction of the new process of discernment for authorized ministry in the UCC. The focus of our meeting will be **"Building Ministry for the 21st Century United Church of Christ"**. There will be a civil rights tour, a TAP commencement, a convocation on Friday afternoon, and much more! Watch this web site and your inbox for more details and registration information coming soon!



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Mission Trips that Matter



Are you looking for a mission trip opportunity for your congregation?

Here is an invitation for a work camp mission trip.

Where: Pleasant Hill, TN, on the beautiful Cumberland Plateau in mid east Tennessee.

Overview: Neighbors Together, a local grass roots organization serving basic needs of individuals and

families in the area, is in need of work groups to help us renovate a small old house recently acquired for office space. Uplands Retirement Village, a UCC supported retirement village with residents from all over the country, and Pleasant Hill Community United Church of Christ, a just peace, whole earth, open and affirming

congregation, will provide additional work sites and support for volunteers.

Available work camp dates: May, June, and early July

Age preference: high school - adult

Length of work camp: Groups are welcome to come for several days to a week.

[Click here to learn more about Neighbors Together](#)

Missionaries Available to Visit Your Local Congregation



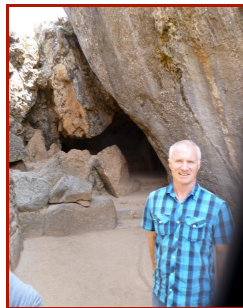
We are pleased to announce that Maryjane and Don Westra, Global Ministry missionaries serving in Zimbabwe will be available to visit your church for to speak at worship or to groups interested in the global ministries of the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). they will be available during the month of October. Don and Maryjane are completing a three-year term of service with the United Church of Christ in Zimbabwe. Don serves as staff to the Micro-Enterprise and Strategic Planning/Management Program at Mt. Selinda and Maryjane serves as a Hospital Administrator which includes administration responsibilities at the Daisy Dube Children's Home in Mt. Selinda.

We are also pleased to announce that Anil and Theresa Henry medical missionaries serving in Mungeli, India, will be available August 21 - September 14, 2012, Anil and Theresa are commissioned by the Alabama-Tennessee Associating for their work in India, and were members of Brookmeade Congregational UCC while they were in Nashville.



Please contact Tim Downs at tdowns@secucc.org or tdowns@secucc.org, if you are interested in making arrangements.

Writing the Sacred: A Journaling, Poetry & Psalm-writing Workshop



Presenter: Ray McGinnis

Date: Thursday, May 10, 2012

Workshop: 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. | Dinner: 6:00 p.m.

Location: Pilgrimage United Church of Christ
3755 Sandy Plains Road, Marietta 30066

Cost: \$15

To register call: 770-971-0007

Writing the Sacred: A Psalm-Writing workshop. As a veteran workshop leader, Ray McGinnis brings a splendid range of writing exercises to spark your imagination. At this workshop, come play with words, come nurture your spirit as you learn ways to make your own new psalms. Explore how Psalm writing can deepen self-understanding, expand self-expression, personal and spiritual growth. Ray offers a splendid range of Psalm excerpts along with other poets who have glimpsed the sacred in the ordinary through writing. Ray brings to this workshop simple step-by-step journal writing and poetry exercises to help you write a new psalm with ease. Come and explore the thin spaces where reflective writing and spirituality meet. This workshop is designed for both those who enjoy writing and those who have never put pen to paper. This is a workshop open to older children, youth and adults. Come and discover how God is still speaking.

Signed copies of Writing the Sacred will be available for sale during the workshop for those who wish to purchase a copy priced at \$20

"This was THE most spiritually honest, open-hearted, accessible workshop I think I have ever attended."

- The Rev. Linda Campbell, St. John's Episcopal Church, Ross, California

"Writing the Sacred is rich with insight, power and meaning. Ray McGinnis gives us a great gift by showing the Psalms to be a living language, a poetic language vital for today. These pages are permeated with our human story - our raw and beautiful longing for God...(and) acts as a healing balm and creative catalyst to help you reclaim your soul's voice." - John Fox, author, Poetic Medicine: The Healing Art of Poem-Making, Mountain View, California

"Have I told you how much I like your book? I just quoted your work to someone again yesterday and she's going to go buy it." – Christina Baldwin, author, Storycatcher, Whidbey Island, Washington

"Some of the people who were at this workshop today I have known for many years. Yet, I found myself starting new conversations, discovering sides of myself, new insights and appreciations of others who are apart of my church family... I come away with some fresh perspectives about myself and who I am in community that feels both surprising, expansive and affirming."

- Mary, Participant, Trinity Congregational Church, Gloucester, Massachusetts

Georgia-South Carolina Annual Meeting 2012



Georgia-South Carolina Association Holds Annual Meeting March 3rd, Hosted by our Newest Congregation

On Saturday, March 3rd, over forty people representing 11 churches gathered for the Annual Meeting of the Association at Decatur UCC, Decatur, Georgia, to worship, elect new officers, hear the report of our team recently returned from the Global Theological Education event which took four of our staff and six of our leaders to Thailand for two and a half weeks to explore interfaith conversations and conflict transformation. The trip was undertaken in collaboration with Lancaster Theological Seminary, which sent six students as well.

Our opening worship, led by Rev. Kathy Burton of Decatur UCC, and musicians of the church invited us to be a church seeking new horizons and engaging the world in mission. Following that Carole Moss, Barbara Sullivan, Debbie Spearman, Kathy Clark, Sarah Kim, and Tim Downs led a conversation about the challenges and joys of global ministry as they had engaged them in the recent trip to Thailand. They spoke of the ways in which barriers were overcome in conversations with Buddhists and Muslims, movingly described their visit to a refugee camp of 30,000 in Mae Sot, Thailand on the Thai Burma border serving the Karen people who had fled oppression in Burma, and lifted up the fact that through the work of Church World Service we are present in that camp.

Cornelius Watts, member of First Congregational UCC Atlanta, and moderator of the Association called the meeting to order. Treasurer Blair Bonds reported that the Association is carrying a balance of \$21,000. Moderator Watts noted that he was completing his term and was grateful for the growth and vitality that has characterized the life of the churches of the Association. The Nominating Committee reported the following nominations: Elizabeth Clement, Moderator, George Drumbor, Vice-Moderator, Blair Bonds, Treasurer, Ginnie Ferrell, Secretary, and Billy Stone and Cynthia Warren delegates at large.

Conference Minister Tim Downs gave a report on the state of the Conference. He thanks Cornelius for his faithful service as Moderator. He said that while there are many signs of hope, the Conference is facing a season of financial challenges in light of the fact that giving from local churches dropped \$10,000 between 2010 and 2011. We have responded in two ways. Debbie Spearman has been hired to engage in financial development and stewardship consultation with churches, and we have cut expenses dramatically in 2012. We have secured substantial grant funding to strengthen our leadership development efforts through the PATHWAYS Program. He also thanked the Association for its support of the reorganization of the process of discernment, authorization and oversight for ministry. This process has historically resided in the association, and we are now moving to doing this collaboratively at the Conference level. This new way of operating will be introduced over the course of 2012.

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Celebrations - April 2012



Brookmeade Congregational Church, UCC is pleased to announce that we have **called Rev. Dr. Marvin L. Morgan to serve as Brookmeade's Intentional Interim Minister**. Dr. Morgan began leading worship services at Brookmeade on February 26th.

Ben Konecny, a recent graduate of Vanderbilt Divinity School, and member of First United Church, UCC, Nashville, has received a call to serve as an associate pastor at a congregation in Rocky Mountain Conference, in Colorado. Ben is a member in discernment in the Alabama-Tennessee Association, and has been determined to be ordainable pending a call by an ecclesiastical council of the association. **Ben will be ordained** into Christian ministry at a service on **Sunday, April 29th at 3:00P, at First United Church UCC, Nashville**.

Richard Baxter, a member of Central Congregational UCC, Atlanta, has been granted status as a member in discernment in the Georgia-South Carolina Association. Dick has been called to serve as the Executive Director of Plymouth Harbor, a senior citizens' respite center and a ministry of Central Congregational UCC.

Christopher McDaniel, a member of Circular Congregational UCC, Charleston, SC and a chaplain at Roper St. Francis Health Center, has been received as a member in discernment in the Georgia-South Carolina Association.

Karen Richardson Dunn, a member of Circular Congregational UCC, Charleston, SC has been received as a member in discernment in the Georgia-South Carolina Association and granted a license for ministry to serve United Reformed Church congregations in Northumberland, UK, beginning in the later summer of 2012.

Henrietta Andrews, recently retired as an associate conference minister in Michigan Conference, UCC, has joined First Congregational UCC, Atlanta, and transferred her ministerial standing to the Georgia-South Carolina Association.

Lou Kavar, member of Central Congregational UCC, Atlanta, has transferred his ministerial standing from Penn West Conference to the Georgia-South Carolina Association. Lou teaches for Capella University

Donna Papenhausen, formerly a member of Pilgrimage UCC, Marietta, GA has transferred her status as a retired UCC minister to Florida.

Leslie Raymer, a member of Virginia-Highland Church, Atlanta, and ordainable pending a call in the Georgia-South Carolina Association has received a call to serve as an associate minister at Sandy Spring Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Sandy Springs, GA.

On March 25th Church of the Savior, Roswell, GA celebrated the ministry of **Chris Graham**. Chris had served the congregation for almost twenty years before retiring due to illness.

The Georgia-South Carolina Association has renewed the licenses for ministry for the following individuals: Serving Evergreen Congregational UCC, in Beachton, GA; Myrtle Johnson and Martha Sue Carter, and for Bethany Congregational UCC, Thomasville, GA, Jeremy Rich. For Rush Memorial UCC, Atlanta Larry Calbert has been granted a standing license, meaning that he no longer is required to renew his licenses annually. Geni Felsing, a member of Circular Congregational UCC, in Charleston, who had been licensed for ministry in health care, has retired from licensed ministry. Jennifer Spears had her licensed renewed to serve Garden of Grace UCC. in Columbia. SC.

SEC, in Columbia, SC.

Linda Smith, a member of Central Congregational UCC, Atlanta, and a chaplain with Compassionate Care Hospice, has been granted a leave of absence as she moves to Florida.

Elizabeth Clement, a member of First Congregational UCC, Atlanta, has announced that she has been called to serve in the Office of general Ministries, as a part of the Financial Development Ministry.

Janet Weidler, who recently served as pastor of Pilgrim UCC, Birmingham, has transferred her ministerial standing to Western North Carolina Association, Southern Conference, where she will continue as an intentional interim minister.

Deborah Douglas, a recent graduate of Eden Theological Seminary, member of Pleasant Hill Community UCC, TN, was ordained in Pleasant Hill February 19th. She has been called to serve as pastor of First United Church of Christ, Belvidere, TN, and will be installed at a service on March 18th at 3:00P.

Thomas Coates, a member of Safe Harbor Family UCC, in Jackson, MS, and a second year student at Lancaster Theological Seminary, in Pennsylvania, was received as a member in discernment in the Alabama-Tennessee Association.

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